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ABSTRACT

The paper examines issues of teaching quality at the university level and offers recommendations concerning training of teaching assistants, the role of the graduate dean, and the role of the chief academic officer. Although both teaching competence and scholarly expertise are commonly recognized as necessary for faculty competence, discrepancies exist in the amount of emphasis placed on research versus teaching effectiveness in the promotion process. Surveys indicate that institutions report offering training for teaching assistants but teaching assistants report receiving little training or supervision. Graduate deans need to allocate teaching assistantships preferentially to programs proving appropriate training, to assign the best teacher-scholars to supervise teaching assistants, and to develop systems that reward faculty who serve as effective mentors. The chief academic officer's leadership role should include such initiatives as: modifying employment selection to include evidence of instructional effectiveness, requiring probationary faculty to demonstrate instructional effectiveness, establishment of Centers for Teaching and Learning to promote faculty instructional development, and establishing regular reviews of professional development plans so that both content expertise and teaching competence of all faculty can be measured on a regular basis. 5 references. (DB)

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Institutional and Graduate School Consumerism: The Missing Link of Commitment to Teaching

by
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The last decade has witnessed a tremendous surge in the amount of external pressure and level of accountability placed on all segments of higher education. Performance indicators have been forthcoming in far ranging areas, such as financial, viability, academic achievement, graduate placement, scholarly accomplishment, teaching performance, and student success. Internally, institutions have responded in a moderate fashion. The assessment movement has received mixed reviews and has already started to wane. Calls for increased attention on teaching effectiveness have received little notice. Concerns over the lack of public support have dissipated to a level of unnoticed rhetoric. Essentially, the academic community has successfully ignored the reality in which it now finds itself.

To make matters worse, the profession has been unwilling to assess or respond to its own internal needs. Consequently, teaching assistants, for the most part, are used in a manner that has gone unchanged for decades. Likewise, Ph.D.'s are prepared with the same narrowly conceived goals of centuries gone by. Academic leaders, on occasion, lament the unwillingness of their campus to change priorities, but are not willing to push for a new agenda. And faculty members, unhappy as they are with their present state of low salary, poor morale, and high demands for scholarship, are not willing to push for reform. There is little wonder why there is internal disarray and external bewilderment about the current state of higher education.

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While no singular action can correct all of these ills, the profession can no longer ignore its need for fully qualified classroom experts. Individuals with content expertise and pedagogical competence are needed. As consumers, institutions must insist on the development of a quality source of teacher-scholars. Quality standards and performance specifications are needed. A new level of customer satisfaction must be created. University administrators must demand better quality that foster higher levels of teaching effectiveness. Graduate school preparation and institutional employment practices (selection, promotion, tenure, etc.) must be modified so they effectively incorporate the teaching responsibilities of the faculty. For most faculty, eighty percent of their time is centered around teaching. Faculty competence in the classroom must reflect the full measure of their teaching competence and scholarly expertise.

The Teaching Agenda

The mid 1980's witnessed a flurry of major reports stressing the need for reform in undergraduate education and in our commitment to teaching. Despite the rhetoric and some major projects dealing with teaching assistant training, there is little evidence to suggest that substantial change is underway. A brief examination of available data, tends to underscore the difficulty in translating well-publicized concern into action.

The Carnegie Foundation's recent survey report by Ernest Boyer (2) of over 5000 faculty members revealed that only thirty-five percent of the faculty at research institutions report teaching as their primary interest. Only twenty-four percent of the same group believe that teaching effectiveness should be the main criterion for promotion or tenure. More to the point for this presentation, is that the data reflect no change in attitude toward the importance of teaching from the 1984 survey on the same topics. According to Boyer, the problem is

in institutions who send mixed signals with respect to the faculty-reward systems by placing an overemphasis on research. Yet, Cochran's (4) recent study of institutional commitment to teaching reveals that almost all the chief academic officers at doctoral institutions believe teaching effectiveness is a significant part of the promotion process. Clearly, there is a communication gap!

The higher education community is now faced with an opportunity to effect change, not by an exclusive focus on the current professoriate, but by turning our attention to the theme of this conference, "Preparing the Professoriate of Tomorrow for Teaching." According to Bowen and Schuster (3), over the next fifteen years, higher education will need over 300,000 new faculty members. If we are genuinely interested in reshaping the professoriate of the next century, the next decade provides ample opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the proposition that the central function of the University is teaching. The thesis of this paper is to address the issue of where in an institution the responsibility for emphasizing and reinforcing the importance of good teaching should be placed and to put forth the proposition that the "missing link of commitment" rests with institutional academic leadership, i.e., the graduate dean and the chief academic officer.

The Role of the Graduate Dean

The preparation of teaching assistants is a key element in the teaching commitment continuum. In this regard, there is a significant leadership role that must be assumed by Deans of Graduate Schools. Again, lets first examine the problem. The faculty of tomorrow will come to institutions directly from their doctoral experience or at the community college level from completing the master's degree. Many will indicate service as a teaching assistant on their

vitae. Does that mean we can assume the individual was awarded the teaching assistantship because he/she impressed the graduate institution with an interest in or potential for teaching? Probably not. A quick review of the Graduate Bulletins from twenty "flagship" institutions in all sections of the country revealed that only **one** institution even mentioned "some form of experience, skill or aptitude for teaching is necessary for appointment as a T.A." In our time-honored fashion, we continue to assume that intelligence and a solid background in the discipline is all that's needed to serve as the primary teacher of undergraduate students. And, perhaps these qualities are all that's needed given the opportunity to monitor and nurture young talent during the graduate experience. This conference, as well as the first conference, certainly suggests a high level of concern. Again, let's examine the data. Among doctoral institutions, Cochran's data suggest that chief academic officers believe their institutions exhibit a moderate level of commitment to providing seminars or workshops on teaching to T.A.'s. However, at thirty percent of those 268 institutions, there is no activity in this area. At the master's level, seventy-two percent of 511 institutions report no activity. The inference to be drawn is that the socialization to teaching is in the hands of a faculty whose primary interest and reward system is firmly grounded in their ability to generate research. Even more telling is Bonwell's (1) study in 1986 of teaching assistants in history.

Bonwell identified ninety-six institutions who had indicated in an earlier survey that T.A. training was provided. From this group, 687 T.A.'s responded to a survey regarding their assignments and level of supervision. Twenty-one percent of the respondents were not assigned to a supervisor. Of those assigned to a faculty mentor, forty-eight percent were never visited in the classroom and seventy-nine percent rated the level of supervisor support as below average.

So, where do we go and what role does the graduate dean play?

- Within institutions, the resources for teaching assistantships and authority to allocate those resources must be placed in the Graduate School. Allocation decisions must be based upon the willingness of programs to provide T.A. training programs either in-house or through institution-wide programs provided by Centers for Teaching or Colleges of Education.
- Faculty assigned to supervise each teaching assistant should come from the ranks of the best teacher-scholars the institution has to offer. The assistant should be viewed as an apprentice who needs and deserves close supervision and feedback. Workshops organized and funded by the graduate school should be available to faculty who will have the primary responsibility for mentoring the T.A.'s.
- Graduate deans must find the resources to develop systems which reward faculty who give the considerable time and energy required to serve as an effective mentor. Released time, faculty development funding and preferential treatment in the award of research funding are but a few of the possibilities.
- Teaching assistant application procedures must reflect the candidate's understanding of the opportunity the experience can provide and demonstrate a commitment to an academic career.
- The Graduate School must consistently gather information from graduate assistants as to the quality of the T.A. experience and share the data with the faculty-mentors. In my own experience, if T.A.'s needs to learn are neglected, it is more often a sin of omission. After all, most of us were T.A.'s and we survived being handed a syllabus

and sent to a classroom — Yet, as persons of good intent, consistently low evaluations by T.A.'s can bring change. If they do not, the graduate dean who controls the allocation process needs to demand that attention be paid to the problems and back up the rhetoric with the withholding of assistantships until such time as the issues are addressed.

- Each doctoral granting institution should construct and fund a cognate area in college teaching which should be available to all graduate students who are seriously considering an academic career. The successful completion of the cognate should be documented on the student's transcript. The graduate dean must assume primary leadership for developing this curricular effort.
- College teaching internships in doctoral programs should be established with specific competencies being well articulated in the program and certified by the graduate dean.

Cochran, in his recent book **Administrative Commitment to Teaching** stated: "The leadership challenge is to provide a reality which ensures that teaching is an integral component in the doctoral program of all higher education personnel." The May 1989 issue of **Policy Perspectives** (5) goes perhaps a step further by recommending that "faculty hired for their first teaching assignment have had a teaching assistantship and . . . the awarding of the Ph.D. should mean that candidates have been evaluated as teachers by their faculty-mentors and not found wanting." (4) To accomplish this goal, graduate dean leadership will need to both significantly influence the process and secure the material resources to effect change.

The Role of the Chief Academic Officer

To complete the socialization process in adopting a teacher-scholar concept, institutions must accept the responsibility for the development of their own faculty members. This process must be heavily influenced by a strong commitment from the chief academic officer. Typically, the chief academic officer (CAO) already devotes a large block of time to personnel-related matters. In most cases, however, too little time is devoted to selection/hiring procedures and other processes integral to the teaching/learning process. The role of leadership at this level includes such initiatives as:

- Employment selection and hiring should be modified to include evidence of instructional effectiveness, such as assessment of videotaped modules, peer reviews, student evaluation data, instructional materials review, and instructional demonstrations during the interview process.
- Probationary faculty should be required to demonstrate instructional effectiveness through formal completion of doctoral cognates or instructional course work taken on campus (after employment). Successful completion of an established set of instructional development modules taken during the first two years of employment should be made a condition of employment.
- After demonstration of instructional competence during the first two years, a base salary adjustment ($2,500 or more) should be made for continuing faculty members.
- Centers for Teaching and Learning or other similar units/programs should be established and given the charge to promote faculty instructional development.

- Faculty assessment components (throughout employment) should be added to all personnel evaluation processes to ensure balanced assessment of content expertise and teaching competence.
- Instructional effectiveness modules and teaching evaluation enhancement strategies need to be put in place for all part-time faculty members.
- Special consideration should be given to the "load assignment" of all new faculty members so they can further develop their instructional materials and teaching strategies.
- Regular reviews of professional development plans should be established for all faculty so their content expertise and teaching competence can be measured on an ongoing basis.

Through the use of these assertive leadership efforts, graduate deans and chief academic officers can fulfill their leadership responsibilities. The push for excellence in the classroom must come from the top!

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